

August 2002

Attendees and Area Announcements listed after minutes.

General Environmental Health Topics

Head Start e-Surveys in WebEHRS

We are starting a new system for surveying Head Starts using a standard format that Darren Buchanan is calling a Head Start "e-Survey", which is within WebEHRS. EIS will not be used anymore. Starting on August 15th (or there about) Kelly is expecting everyone to start using the new system (actual date depends on Darren, Ralph Fulgham, and Bob Bialas agreeing on some format issues). Darren will be explaining/introducing it a bit and then you can get some clarification/interaction/questions answered from Bob and Ralph.

Darren said the e-Survey would be available across the agency around August 15th. The system is imbedded in WebEHRS so the surveys entered will be connected to the facilities that are already entered in WebEHRS. This will allow a person to take a version of the checklist that Head Start has already provided and be able to enter those items directly into the system, add any comments, generate reports. It will track the history of different types of violations, criticals and non-criticals, and whether or not this is a repeat violation. What this will do is give Bob and Ralph a way to be able to look at the data as needed, instead of looking at it once a year, as they currently do. We will not be using EIS system – there will be a transition from EIS into the e-Survey portion of WebEHRS. EIS was an application that was written in a very different type of era with a computer application that was based on a model that FDA used and had more of a "field-office" relationship. IHS is more of an "enterprise", which is a term used in networking technology. The idea was to build an application that will enable people to get reports as needed. Bob and Ralph have been looking at the system, testing it out and giving Darren feedback.

In addition to this application right now, Oklahoma is also testing the e-Survey with food, water, casinos, elder care centers, and other types of surveys. Oklahoma has been one of the test areas for this and he has been getting feedback from them and things seem to be going pretty well. We are looking at tying this to health indicators in the future, but right now we want to get rolling on Head Starts, get some feedback, and get data to Bob and Ralph on a regular basis. There will be notification and instructions available on WebEHRS when the e-Survey becomes active. Darren is working on instructions to guide people through the process of entering surveys. Along with other projects, this will tie together nicely in the way we will look at our communities, the way we profile them, and ultimately, the way we ask for funds.

WebEHRS training January 21 - 23, 2003

Darren is currently working on on-line training for the e-Survey. There will be a WebEHRS training in Albuquerque in January 2003. There will be two classes, each class is 1.5 days long. The first class starts January 21st and ends mid-day on January 22nd. The second course starts mid-day on January 22nd and ends on January 23rd. Each class will have room for 25 students and he would like both classes to be full. If it is not feasible to send several people from your area, at least send one person who can then return to your area and do a workshop locally for the rest of your staff. WebEHRS has grown from just starting off as something we used to track the types and numbers of facilities, to being a management tool, and will eventually encompass spatial analysis and community health status indicators. He again stressed he would like both classes to be full.

Bob said Darren did an outstanding job on this, it's easy to go through and follow the instructions. He thinks everyone will be able to pick it up very easily.

Darren said he is hoping this will be beneficial and he is looking forward to getting comments back, because WebEHRS has always grown when he gets good feedback from the field. When people let him know what they would like to be able to do, then he can look at to see if it that would be feasible.

The question was asked if sometime in the future would we be able to compare areas, such as the percentages of facilities surveyed, or the number of critical violations in Head Starts? Darren responded that that would assume each area uses WebEHRs for the same thing. With the Head Start surveys, Bob and Ralph have to have this data, because it ties into funding, so the surveys will be a standard format. In that case, absolutely, we should be able to get reports across all areas. But because all areas don't use the same format for surveys, we won't be able to compare survey results for say, all swimming pools, or all water system surveys.

Some people use WebEHRS as a management tool every day, their login counts are very high. Kelly said there appear to be some areas that don't really remember it's there; there is very little activity. Her first idea for comparing results across areas was going to be related to health status indicators and not looking at who has surveyed the most facilities and what the percentages are – that's not her interests at all. She would prefer trying to incorporate some sort of health indicator data where we would be able to pull up summary health status data. Right now, Head Start surveys are good examples to use in discussing health status indicators, because the format will be the same in each area. When we move on to other surveys, we start talking about summary health indicator data. This discussion can get very long and involved, and Kelly didn't want to go into too great detail on this call. We will continue this discussion as the field and areas begin using WebEHRS more. Kelly said she didn't know if that answer was anywhere near what was being asked, but the simple answer is, if you want to know what the percentages are of completed surveys you will have to call each of the areas and find out. Comparison of health status indicators is a different issue.

Jeff Smith understood that once the Head Start data was submitted for this year, they would get some sort of summary report back, as they are unable to generate this report locally.

Darren said he is still waiting for the data to be finalized. When that's done, Bob and Ralph will prepare a report.

Comments on Billet Guidelines

Kelly said she hoped everyone had read over the billet summary. She is not expecting to come to major consensus on this call, but does need to get it started, probably have to continue discussing this in between conference calls. She didn't think people were quite clear on what she was talking about last time. The primary objective is to answer the question, "What guidance should be given to area staff to insure that billets are applied equitably?" If we don't come up with guidance, personnel is going to come up with something for us, so she has told Paul McSherry that we will try to give personnel some guidance. For this call, we want to pay particular attention to Attachments 3 & 4. Only one person on the call had this document with them. Kelly briefly went over the areas she wanted to get comments on. She mentioned that if people do not give her comments, she would come up with something herself and send it to McSherry. If you want input, she needs comments, so give her some help.

Attachment 3, Scoring Guideline for Environmental Health Officer Standard Billets, has the criteria used to grade some of these billets – program management, responsibilities, nature and purpose of contacts, consequences of judgmental error, technical difficulty, academic degree and professional registration. The top row has each of the billets: EH Officer II, III, IV & V – also show functional titles for those: Field, Service Unit, Tribal, District, Staff Sanitarian, Deputy and Director. It goes into detail about what the responsibilities are, what makes that billet that grade. The thing that seems to do most of the explaining would be the footnotes. It doesn't start getting into anything that people have problems with until it starts talking about Service Unit, Tribal Sanitarians and District Sanitarians (Environmental Health Officer III and IV, which would be the O-4, O-5 billets). These were the sticky issues when this was first being developed. Because of federal down sizing and compacting/contracting, things have changed a bit, and we were getting rid of some levels of guidance. Some Service Unit or Tribal Environmental Health Officers don't receive guidance from District Sanitarians or Area offices any more. Some felt we should be seeing more O-5 Service Unit or Tribal EHO. The footnotes attempt to describe the criteria for the different grades, when one would be an O-4 or O-5. Kelly asked that everyone pay particular attention to those footnotes; see if you agree with them. Notice the criteria that talked about providing direct service to at least 20 tribes or a population of at least 20,000. She wants to get specific comments. This table was supposed to temporarily address the Environmental Health Officer III and Environmental Health Officers IV issue, but it could be permanent. Right now, we will concentrate on Environmental Health Officers billets, Attachment 3, and the narrative guidance that goes with it.

Mark said he would write up his comments to her and e-mail them to the other chiefs. John from Billings said he will send her his comments.

Kelly said if anyone didn't want to discuss their comments on the conference call, give her a call later and they would discuss.

She was asked if there is a deadline for comments. She set August 8th as the deadline, as people have had plenty of time to review the document.

Agency Promotion Recommendations

Kelly said she thinks everyone has heard the 6th precept is back in again. Branch Chiefs quit commenting on this document because everyone was under the impression it would not be used any more. Now that we will actually be using it again, we need to continue our discussion. We had a task at headquarters before we could get your final comments: Alan was going to pull together the comments from the last Branch Chief meeting, which were based on the comments, recommendations, suggestions from the Agency Promotion Board and send out to you. He hasn't done that yet. She asked if everyone still has the suggestions from the Board that were passed out at the Branch Chief meeting. No one could even remember this discussion, much less the specific suggestions from that meeting.

Jeff reminded everyone that we all discussed this during the Branch Chief meeting at great length and had some detailed discussions over some issues. People may recall there was discussion on some score changing. They talked about why the scores had gotten changed and questioned whether scores were changed equitably across areas.

Kelly said she would send the document out again to everyone – look for it on e-mail. Then the discussion will be picked up where left off. Narrative and score sheets are on the web site.

National RRM report

Kelly said she shouldn't have to remind anyone about this, but she will. Branch Chiefs need to ensure that all facilities listed in WebEHRS are up to date by October 1st, 4:00 PM Eastern Time. That's when Darren will run the Headquarters Area RRM reports and freeze the data set. This report is what will be used for RRM determination.

The reason she didn't think a reminder was necessary was because the whole idea behind WebEHRS was that you could keep it up to date constantly and there wasn't a need for a last minute flurry of activity to be putting in, removing or correcting facilities. For those folks who have been ignoring it, you have until October 1st, 4:00 PM Eastern Time.

The Injury Prevention RRM won't change for a while until Alan puts in the new numbers for population and mortality data.

Need Junior Officer on EHO PAC

Kelly reported there is a need for a Junior Officer on the EHO PAC. The Junior Officer is someone with less than five years experience. If you have a Junior Officer who is interested, encourage them to apply. The application is on the EHO PAC web site.

Injury Prevention Topics

Injury Prevention Youth Initiative Money

Kelly said the Injury Prevention Program is working on getting \$253,000 from Maternal and Child Health for youth initiatives. The funding will be allocated to the following initiatives:

\$70,000	Expand the Sleep Safe Site and conduct an evaluation of that program.
\$65,000	Development and pilot testing of the Ride Safe Initiative, which is based on the Sleep Safe Initiative. Pilot testing will be done in the Bemidji Area.
\$25,000	Support child passenger protection work.
\$25,000	Support NITSA child passenger protection training – similar to what was done with NITSA agreement.
\$48,000	Part I grantees to implement a booster seat program.
\$20,000	Support agreement NTISA and NIEA and IHS – promote traffic safety among Indian youth through demonstration project.

Alan and Kelly thought the \$253,000 was going to be sent to HQ and then HQ would send it out to the various area programs. Finance just sent a memo that it would be coming out of Hospital and Clinic funds, so it couldn't go to HQ and would have to go directly to the areas. This started a discussion as to whether all areas had to spend or just obligate the money before the end of the fiscal year. Once that is figured out, HQ will let everyone know when and how that money will go out.

Vacancy Table

Please be sure to keep the Vacancy Table on the DEHS website current. The table is located at www.dehs.ihs.gov.

Participants and Area Announcements

Aberdeen: Not on call

Albuquerque: Fan Robinson. Fan reported a GS-12 District Sanitarian position will be opening soon in Santa Fe. The Albuquerque Area is working with the state on an emergency preparedness document. They are also working with the 638 Tribes in their Area who are talking about buying back some services.

Anchorage: Tom Coolidge & Jeff Smith. Tom reported Secretary Thompson was arriving in Alaska today. There are several village trips planned.

Due to difficulties with the phone system, the following were e-mailed by Jeff to add to the August 1, 2002 minutes:

1) Field EHO position open in Bethel Alaska (O2/O3). Jeff asked the Branch Chiefs if they had COSTEPs that were about to graduate to consider encouraging them to apply. Do other Areas have COSTEPs that will be done with school at the completion of their COSTEP? Alaska has three. One will be going into the Peace Corps, but the other two are possible applicants.

2) Rick Orlando recently received notification that he successfully passed the CIH exam. Keith Cook recently passed the CHEM certification exam

Bemidji: Diana Kuklinski. Diana gave an update on two vacancies and noted they are listed on the EHS web site. One is for a Red Lake Tribal Sanitarian; she has the Tribe contact information. The other is a Service Unit Sanitarian in the Bemidji District Office, for this position they are looking for a GS-9 or an O-2 or O-3. The closing date is August 6th, but may have to re-advertise due to insufficient number of applicants.

Billings: John Sery & John Holland.

California: Paul Young. Paul reported he has a meeting scheduled with the Region 9 EPA Director next week. They have several joint venture activities with them currently; this will be an informational meeting. They are working on setting up a meeting with Governor Davis' office concerning the casino pact made with the Tribes.

Nashville: Not on call

Navajo: Ken Secord & Ralph Fulgham. Ken reported they have filled the Field Sanitarian position in Ship Rock and they have a vacancy for a Field Sanitarian in Ft. Defiance.

Oklahoma: Harold Cully

Phoenix: Mike Welch, Dave McMahon. Mike reported the Phoenix Indian Medical Center selected a Safety Officer, Butch Creamer, who will report September 1. Will be opening up a Service Unit Sanitarian position at the Phoenix Service Unit, which will be located in the Western District Office. This position should be advertised in the next week or so. They are currently looking at PJDs for two new facilities: Ft. Yuma Hospital and Phoenix Indian Medical Center, which will have three separate facilities built as part of this project. Their area had 8 CO-STEPS this summer – 2 in Environmental Health, 4 in Sanitation Facilities, 2 in Facilities Engineering. Tomorrow they will be having their 2nd Annual CO-STEP Symposium – the CO-STEPS give a presentation on how they spent their summer vacation.

They had a visit from Merritt Lake from headquarters and COL Rob Lipnick from USUHS and the Institutional Environmental Health Officer Residents Brian Hroch and Gary Carter. At the meeting they shared information about expectations and what the needs are in the Institutional Residency program.

Dave McMahon reported on a meeting on bio-terrorism with the Navajos. John Smart put the meeting together with Dr. Peters, Chief Medical Officer at Navajo, to discuss the bio-terrorism grant monies and bio-terrorism activities in the Area. The meeting included Environmental Health, as well as EMS from both New Mexico and Arizona, and the Public Health Nurse from Ship Rock. The meeting covered what the states are doing, what things they are doing to work with the Tribes on bio-terrorism. IHS is working as a liaison between the Tribes and State. They have been putting together documents such as policies and procedures, assessment tools. They will share these documents with everyone.

Mike reported on an Institutional Health Officer Internship/Fellowship for Commissioned Officers with the Joint Commission. The Commissioned Officer would spend time with the Joint Commission working with their staff, becoming knowledgeable in all aspects of JC and would then work for JC for a "to be determined" amount of time. He was not sure the length of time required for the Internship/Fellowship.

Portland: Bob Bialas

Tucson: Mark Pike

Environmental Health Support Center: Not on call

Rockville: Kelly Taylor, Darren Buchanan. Kelly reminded everyone of the August 8th deadline for comments on the billet guidelines.

Next Call

September 5, 2002, conference call numbers are the same for each call:

Dial in Number: **1-888-323-7711** (for all calls)

*Pass Code: **90841** (for all calls)